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New Partnership Promises "High-Impact" Food Safety Campaign

A new public/private partnership is promising to do what no single public or private entity can do alone: bring together the necessary resources to create, launch and maintain a "high-impact" safe food handling campaign.

In a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) signed in May, several federal agencies joined with consumer and food industry groups to lay the groundwork for a new consumer education campaign under the Partnership for Food Safety Education.

Recent survey research shows a decline in consumer knowledge about safe food handling. In addition, consumers do not appear to be acting on food safety messages that have been used for years by both government and industry. As a result, "newly designed messages are needed for the consumers of the 21st century," according to the announcement.

The Partnership plans on developing accurate, science-based, and consumer-oriented messages to promote safe handling behaviors.

The Partnership will be working to develop one overarching theme or slogan similar to "Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires." The plan calls for reproducible campaign materials to be ready by fall. The messages will then be distributed through the media, as well as through each Partnership member. While distribution plans are not complete, campaign materials will ultimately be available to all interested food safety educators. (Look for more information in upcoming issues of this newsletter.)

"Our goal is to have a national campaign that can have an impact on consumers' food handling behaviors," according to Dagmar Farr of the Food Marketing Institute, one of the Partnership members.

To develop the campaign, the Partnership has retained three major public relations firms: Hill and Knowlton, J. Walter Thompson and Yankelovich Partners. The agencies have extensive experience in

consumer education programs ranging from Shape Up America! to the anti-drug abuse efforts of the Partnership for a Drug-Free America.

To date, industry members have pledged over \$500,000 toward the development and production of the educational campaign. They have the goal of raising \$1 million the first year of the Partnership. The government agencies have agreed to produce materials as well as provide technical assistance and support.

Organizations interested in joining as a Partnership member should contact Dagmar Farr, Food Marketing Institute, 202/452-8444.

Federal participants include:

- U.S. Department of Agriculture
 - Food Safety and Inspection Service
 - Cooperative State, Research, Education and Extension Service
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
 - Food and Drug Administration
 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- U.S. Department of Education

To date, the campaign is funded by 6 industry organizations:

- The American Egg Board
- The American Meat Institute
- Food Marketing Institute
- National Cattlemen's Beef Association
- Industry Council on Food Safety/National Restaurant Association
- The Produce Marketing Association.

Other participants include:

- Safe Food Coalition
- Public Voice for Food and Health Policy
- Consumer Federation of America
- Association of Food and Drug Officials
- Grocery Manufacturers of America ●

the tip-off section

The new public/private partnership is only a part of new currents in food safety education.

The next issue of this newsletter will highlight presentations from our national conference for food safety educators, "Changing Strategies, Changing Behaviors."

Also: Look for news about our soon-to-be-announced electronic network connecting food safety educators throughout the country to U.S. government food safety information.

FoodNet ID's Pathogens Causing Foodborne Disease

Campylobacter may be the most common pathogen causing diarrheal illness, according to the new sentinel site surveillance program known as FoodNet, launched in 1995 by USDA, FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

This information was released in a Report to Congress issued in March by USDA on the results of the first year of the FSIS/CDC/FDA Sentinel Site Study—now known as FoodNet.

FoodNet is unique because it **actively** gathers information on foodborne illness in specific sentinel sites instead of simply **passively** recording information sent to CDC by health officials. The current report

covers information gathered in five sites in California, Connecticut, Georgia, Minnesota and Oregon. Sites in Maryland and New York will be added this year.

According to Kaye Wachsmuth, acting deputy administrator, Office of Public Health and Science at FSIS, "because the program is still relatively new, it is too early to draw conclusions about trends in relation to specific pathogens, but we may be able to start seeing some trends this year."

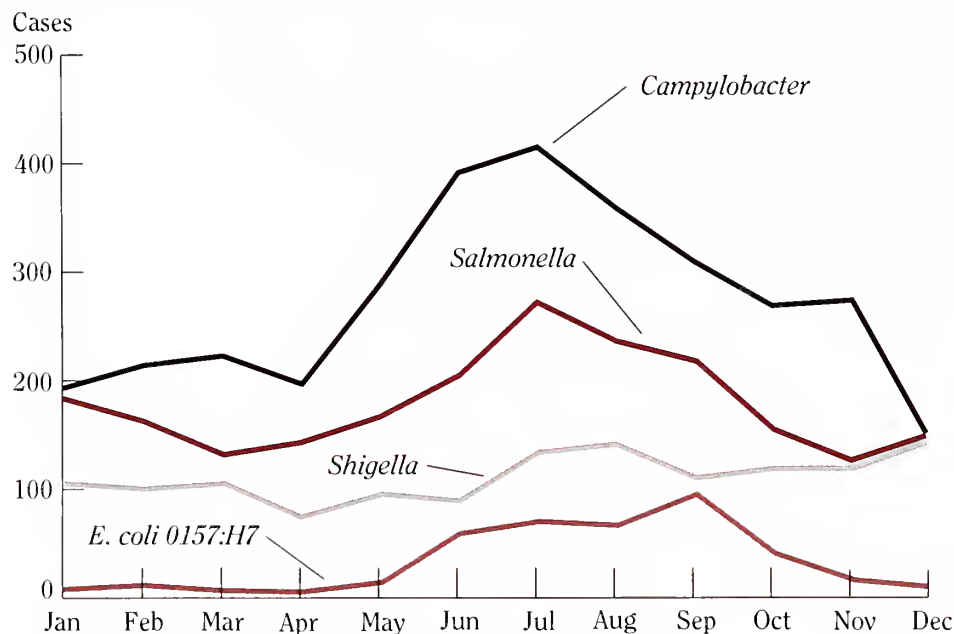
Peggy Nunnery, FSIS's director of the Food Hazard Surveillance Division, adds that "survey information available later this year will help identify food products and consumer behaviors that

may contribute to foodborne illness. This information will be some of the most valuable the survey yields, especially to food safety educators."

While foodborne illness is estimated to cost billions of dollars each year in the U.S., an accurate picture of both the number and causes of foodborne illness is unknown. Estimates of foodborne disease cases vary from 6 million to 81 million annually. The current sentinel site system, which may be expanded in the future, was started to improve data on foodborne illness and measure the impact of federal interventions.

For a copy of the report, check the FSIS homepage at www.usda.gov/fsis. Or, fax your request to FSIS Public Outreach at (202)720-9063. ●

FoodNet: Cases, by month of collection, all sites—1996



Data from Report to Congress. FSIS/CDC/FDA Sentinel Site Study Feb, 1997

■ Handling Food Safely in the Summer More Important Than Ever

"We've always known foodborne illness increases during the summer," notes Susan Conley, director of the Food Safety Education and Communications Staff. "Now data from Food Net provides graphic evidence that shows cases peaking during summer months in the five sentinel site areas." ●

I t's Summer! Safe Handling Reminders

Fact sheets from the specialists on USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline zero in on safe food handling in the summer—plus a new fact sheet summarizes information on “Bacteria That Cause Foodborne Illness.”

- **Barbecue Food Safety:** This fact sheet walks you through the steps to safe food handling before you barbecue (including shopping, defrosting, marinating, pre-cooking, and getting to the picnic), as well as safe grilling.
- **Summer Food Handling:** The key fact in this fact sheet is this: in summertime, foods can quickly reach the “Danger Zone” (the temperatures between 40 degrees F. and 140 degrees F. where bacteria multiply rapidly). To keep food safe, the fact sheet reminds consumers about the importance of food safety basics.
- **Food Safety on the Road.** This fact sheet gives tips on safely handling food when camping, boating, traveling in the car, or going to the beach.
The fact sheets—plus a graphic about summer food safety—are included as inserts in this newsletter. You can also access them through the FSIS homepage at www.usda.gov/fsis. Or, you can dial in to our Fast Fax at 1-800-238-8281.



From USDA: A Citizen's Guide to Food Recovery

“A produce wholesaler in Santa Barbara donates 30 flats of slightly soft strawberries to a local food bank.

A restaurant owner in Florida brings four unsold pizzas to a lunch program at a community shelter.

A member of the AmeriCorps National Service Program in Iowa recruits community volunteers to pick corn from an already harvested field. What do these people have in common?

Whether you call it gleaning, food rescue, or food recovery, they are all part of a growing community of individuals who work from day to day to make sure good food goes to the dinner table instead of going to waste.

In the United States, we not only produce an abundance of food, we waste an enormous amount of it as well. Up to one-fifth of America's food goes to waste—in fields, commercial kitchens, markets, schools and restaurants.

Even in a society where just about everything is disposable, good food going to waste is unacceptable. As long as any child or adult in this country is going hungry, food recovery will be one of my highest personal priorities as Secretary of Agriculture....

This handbook is about what you can do. It lists ways you can join this growing community of volunteers. In short, it tells you how to make a daily difference in the lives and futures of hungry families across our Nation.”

—Secretary of Agriculture, Dan Glickman, excerpts from the Foreword, “A Citizens’ Guide to Food Recovery.”

A Quick Look at This Pub

With this introduction, Secretary Dan Glickman presents the compelling case for food recovery and gleaning. The publication is a resource guide for people—both public officials and private citizens—interested in how to operate food recovery programs.

It describes major food recovery activities already taking place and suggests how people can support existing programs or start new ones. And it outlines key considerations relating to legal issues and food safety.

As a case study, it looks at a USDA-sponsored AmeriCorps project that focused on gleaning.

Finally, it includes a resource directory, including Internet information and a state-by-state breakdown of organizations involved in food recovery.

Food Safety and Food Recovery

Food safety is clearly a critical issue in food recovery projects. As a result, the resource publication also includes guidelines on safe food handling prepared by the Chef and the Child Foundation, Inc. of the American Culinary Federation, Inc. These guidelines are drawn from a training program developed specifically for organizations receiving donated foods. The training program is titled “Understanding Prepared Foods” and includes a video and workbook. The costs are nominal: \$2.50 for the workbook, \$5 for the video, plus shipping. For more information, contact:

The Chef and the Child Foundation
American Culinary Federation
10 San Bartola Drive, St. Augustine,
FL 32086
Phone (904)824-4468, Ext. 104

For copies of the “Citizen's Guide to Food Recovery,” contact USDA's toll-free hotline at 1-800-GLEANIT. The hotline also provides information about USDA food distribution and establishes linkages between potential food donors and community programs.

The guide is also available on the Internet. You can access it by going to USDA's home page: www.usda.gov.

Fed/State Training Targets Sanitarians

A new federal/state partnership is moving to provide training programs for sanitarians on potential health risks associated with meat and poultry products produced at retail stores and restaurants.

FSIS is teaming with the Association of Food and Drug Officials to develop a program which will be delivered over the next 2 years through nationwide satellite downlinks starting May 29. These programs will then be published in stand-alone training packages.

"New technologies have made it possible for stores and restaurants to process their own products—instead of buying processed products from FSIS-inspected plants. This training lets us share our knowledge with health officials who can provide guidance at the local level.

"We want to make sure meat products are processed safely whether it's at a federally inspected plant or your local store," according to Dan Vitiello of FSIS.

Training will focus on: Fabrication, Curing, Smoking, Grinding, Stuffing, Cooking/Cooling, Packaging, Labeling, and HACCP.

For more information, call Dan Vitiello at (202) 690-2676 or Shirley Bohm, Illinois Public Health Department, (217) 785-2439. ●

■ Don't Get Bugged!

Now this sounds like a fun way to learn.

From the University of Nebraska's Cooperative Extension, this is a food safety game for people from "12 to 112." According to project developer Alice Henneman, there's a "quiz bowl" version for use with single players at health fairs or clinics, plus a "bingo" version for use in group settings.

According to Henneman, "the great thing about this game is that it's really a delivery system, a way of teaching about food safety so it can be updated as new pathogens or concerns come along."

The materials (which are not copyrighted) are presented on durable, high-quality cards and are ready to be copied. "Within a half an hour of receiving the game you can be up and running and giving a presentation," says Henneman.

"In the first 6 months of distribution, more than 750 educators in 45 states have ordered the game."

It's available for cost at \$13.95 plus \$2 shipping and handling.

If ordering only 1 or 2 games, payment must be included. Please make payable to "Lancaster County Cooperative Extension." Phone: (402)441-7180 or fax: (402)441-7148.

Internet address:

<http://www.ianr.unl.edu/ianr/lanco/family/buggame.htm>.

Email: cnty5028@unlvm.unl.edu ●



Lysol Pub Teaches Food Safety At Home

Lysol, working with USDA, has developed a new brochure about safe food handling at home. The brochure also includes cleaning tips including the use of sponges vs. paper towels, cutting boards, soap and water and antibacterial kitchen products.

Developed as a public service, the brochure is available through the Consumer Information Center. To order a single copy, write:

Consumer Information Center
Item # 625D
Pueblo, CO 81009 ●

■ Foodsafe: An Internet Discussion Group

This discussion group is sponsored by the USDA/FDA Foodborne Illness Education Information Center. According to the Center's director, Cindy Roberts, "this is an online, interactive discussion group for professionals interested in food safety issues."

Topics will include sharing resources for food safety education, dialogue on foodborne illness epidemiology and strategies for changing unsafe food preparation behaviors. Currently, 575 people are signed up as subscribers.

To subscribe, send a message to: majordomo@nal.usda.gov.

In the body, type: subscribe foodsafe your name <your Email address>.

OR—you can subscribe by accessing the Information Center's world wide web site and following the instructions: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodborne/foodborn.htm>. ●

From CDC:

"E. coli O157:H7: What the Clinical Microbiologist should Know"—This is a free video tape and booklet from the Division of Bacterial and Mycotic Diseases. Call (404) 639-2206. ●

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them down and fax them in, attention:
Editor, FSE.

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